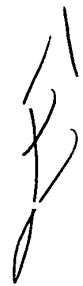


IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 15-28 and 30, and add new claims 38-41 in the manner set forth below.

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1. (Previously Amended) Filter aid which comprises finely divided wood particles which have been subjected to a chemical liquid treatment that removes sensorially active substances therefrom, wherein the particles are subjected to a treatment with a dilute alkali solution at a temperature below 100°C and at atmospheric pressure, to a degree sufficient to remove the sensorially active substances from the wood particles and leave the wood particles as wood particles.
 2. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the finely divided wood particles comprise wood fibers.
 3. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the finely divided wood particles comprise wood comminution residues.
 4. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the finely divided wood essentially comprises only wood particles of one and the same type, size distribution and pretreatment.
 5. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the finely divided wood comprises at least two fractions of particles comminuted by different processes.
 6. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the finely divided wood comprises at least two fractions of wood particles comminuted to different dimensions.

7. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the finely divided wood comprises fractions of wood particles produced from at least two different starting materials.

8. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the filter aid comprises other organic or inorganic fractions which do not affect the filtration properties.

9. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the filter aid comprises at least one other filter-active fraction.

10. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the filter aid comprises other mineral fractions.

11. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 8, wherein the at least one other filter-active fraction comprises kieselguhr.

12. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the at least one other filter active fraction comprises perlite.

13. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein a mean particle dimension of the filter aid is below 3.0 mm.

14. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 2, wherein a mean fiber diameter of the wood fibers is below 1.0 mm.

15. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process for producing the filter aid according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the particles are digested with the dilute alkali solution during a period of action.

16. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the temperature of the dilute alkali solution during the treatment is in the range of room temperature.

17. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the temperature of the dilute alkali solution during treatment is 50-100°C.

18. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the temperature of the dilute alkali solution during the treatment is from 70 to 90°C.

19. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein concentration of the dilute alkali solution is from 2 to 10% by weight, based on the solids content

20. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the alkali solution used is sodium hydroxide solution.

21. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the period of action is of a duration such that at most 10% by weight on an absolutely dry basis of the wood constituents are removed.

22. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the period of action is from 5 to 120 min.

23. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the consistency during the treatment is from 5 to 25%.

24. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the particles are washed and dried after the period of action.

25. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the particle size during the treatment is up to 10 mm, preferably from 0.1 to 1.0 mm.

26. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the water value is set by influencing the grinding in the wet phase (refiner).

27. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the particles are further comminuted after the treatment and before the drying, simultaneously with the drying or after the drying.

28. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) Process according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the particles are classified after the treatment and the drying.

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) The use of finely divided wood particles which have been treated according to claim 15 as filter aid.

31-35. (Cancelled)

36. (Previously Amended) Filter aid for use in forming a prefloat filter layer for filtration of liquids comprising finely divided wood particles which have been subjected to a chemical liquid treatment that removes sensorially active substances therefrom, wherein the wood particles are subjected to a treatment with a dilute

alkali solution at a temperature below 100 °C and at atmospheric pressure, to a degree sufficient to remove the sensorially active substances from the wood particles and leave the wood particles as wood particles.

37. (Previously Amended) Filter aid according to claim 36, wherein a mean particle dimension is below 3.0 mm.

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38. (New) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein a lignin content in the wood particles after the treatment, is substantially unchanged with respect to the lignin content in the wood particles before the treatment.

39. (New) Filter aid according to claim 1, wherein the wood particles after the treatment remain as loose wood particles with a wood character.

40. (New) A filter aid, for use as a beverage filtering prefloat filter layer, comprising:


finely divided lignin-containing wood particles treated with a dilute alkali solution at a temperature below 100°C and at atmospheric pressure, to a degree:

a) sufficient to remove the sensorially active substances from the wood particles,

b) insufficient to quantitatively extract lignin from the wood particles, and to

c) leave the wood particles as loose wood particles with a wood character adapted for use as a filter aid in the beverage filtering prefloat filter layer.

41. (New) A beverage filtering prefloat filter layer comprising a filter aid wherein the filter aid comprises:

 finely divided wood particles which have been subjected to a chemical liquid treatment that removes sensorially active substances therefrom, wherein the wood particles are subjected to a treatment with a dilute alkali solution at a temperature below 100°C and at atmospheric pressure, to a degree

a) sufficient to remove the sensorially active substances from the wood particles,

b) insufficient to quantitatively extract lignin from the wood particles

and to

c) leave the wood particles as wood particles.
